



Elkhead Reservoir Enlargement Update

October 24, 2004

The Elkhead Reservoir Enlargement is now at the watershed moment where the lengthy period of pre-construction negotiations is finally giving way to real action. First conceived in 1990, the enlargement of Elkhead Reservoir is designed to provide additional water for endangered fish and human uses in the Yampa River Basin in order to prevent conflicts between the two. The prospect of beginning the actual construction process appears to be imminent, pending the conclusion of the permitting process.

A large group of public and private agencies are cooperating on the Elkhead enlargement. Arriving at a final series of agreements acceptable to all agencies involved has taken a great deal of time, but now all parties are formally in agreement on the much-needed reservoir enlargement. This update will discuss where we going from here.

Project Schedule

October 20, 2004 - Short list of qualified general contractors created; project design submitted to Colorado Dam Safety Program for review.

October 27, 2004 - Contractor site visits occur, bid solicitation begins.

December 1, 2004 - General contractor bids due. Reservoir draw-down begins.

January 18, 2005 - Construction contract awarded.

February 1, 2005 - State Park and reservoir property closed to public.

March 1, 2005 - Work begins.

April 15, 2005 - County Road detour opens.

November 2006 - Construction work substantially complete - dam road reopened.

Spring 2007 - Park facilities complete - Elkhead Reservoir re-opened for recreation.

Other Highlights:

■ URS Completing Project Design

URS Engineering is completing the final design of the dam enlargement, new spillway and outlet works, new roads, replacement recreation facilities, replacement wetlands and fish containment screens. The final design has been submitted to the State of Colorado Dam Safety Program offices for review. Due to input from the local fishing community, preserving the non-native sport fishery in the reservoir during and after construction became an added design challenge and priority.

■ Financing and Administrative Issues

Final agreements on how to pay for the project are nearing completion. The Colorado River Water Conservation District (River District) is funding the portion of the project that will provide approximately 6,700 acre-feet of water for future human

needs in the Yampa River Basin. Funding for the stored water necessary to recover endangered fish in the Yampa River is coming from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Colorado.

Other critical agreements that are nearing completion involve the City of Craig and the Yampa Participants. The City of Craig owns the existing reservoir and its permission is necessary to begin enlargement. The Yampa Participants are the owners and operators of the Craig Station power plant and own a pool of water in Elkhead Reservoir that is used by their power generating facilities. A replacement source of water for use during the construction period is necessary to assure the power plant can continue generation.

Acquisition of about 35 acres of land surrounding the reservoir is necessary to provide flood easements or rights-of-way. Compensation offers have been extended to the seven owners of the affected land, and all parties are working on equitable settlements.

- **Yampa River Basin Plan and Programmatic Biological Opinion(PBO)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared the Management Plan for Endangered Fishes in the Yampa River Basin (Yampa Plan) to allow existing and future water diversions from the Yampa River to coexist with federal regulations designed to recover populations of endangered fish. Significant components of the Yampa Plan include providing adequate flows in the Yampa River, reducing numbers of non-native fish in the Yampa River, and restoring the habitat of endangered fish in the Yampa River. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will complete federal environmental reviews of the Yampa Plan this year.

- **Clean Water Act Permitting**

Since the Elkhead Enlargement will have impacts on wetlands, a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to commencing construction activities is necessary to comply with the federal Clean Water Act. Final action on the permit by the Corps should take place in November 2004.

- **Recreation at Elkhead Reservoir**

For safety and security reasons, Elkhead Reservoir, Elkhead Reservoir State Park and associated lands will be closed to public use from February 1, 2005 until April 2007. During this time, these properties will be under the control of the general contractor. Colorado State Parks rangers and the Moffat and Routt counties' Sheriffs departments will be patrolling the area during the closure to ensure public safety.

Many of the existing recreation facilities will need to be replaced or relocated as a result of the enlargement. In addition, Colorado State Parks will make a significant financial investment in new campgrounds and other recreational facilities around the reservoir. These facilities will open in the Spring of 2007.

- **County Road Detour**

Public hearings are being held on the detour of county roads around the project site. County Road 28 crosses the dam crest and traffic using the road must be detoured while the dam is reconstructed. The Moffat County Planning Commission will discuss the issue at a meeting on Tuesday, November 2nd at 6:30pm at the Moffat County Court House. The Moffat County Commissioners will also discuss the traffic rerouting at their November 9th meeting at 11:00am.

